

outreach efforts have touched veterans in many different locations throughout the Heartland. In 2013, Kansas City VA staff hosted and/or participated in more than 40 veteran-focused events. Director Hill can be seen at many different events always supporting causes and programs for our veterans. He has a strong dedication and commitment to the veterans he serves. One of the most compelling stories about Director Hill is when he attended the funeral of a civil war veteran, whose family had long-awaited formal burial. These are only a few of the many examples of how Kent Hill has torn down barriers and gained the respect of our veterans.

Perhaps the most gratifying praise one can receive is to have the respect and appreciation from those they serve. Among the veterans of Missouri's Fifth District, Director Hill is regarded as a listener who takes their concerns seriously and will take the time to discuss solutions, explains his position with diplomacy and compassion. In an effort to have a closer relationship with our veterans, he meets periodically with the Veterans Focus Liaison Committee. This committee concept was presented to Director Hill by a group of veterans who received services at the Kansas City VA Medical Center. The idea was readily accepted and this grassroots committee took shape. The members talk to their peers and relay their concerns to the Director. He has been receptive to their suggestions and always willing to investigate their grievances. This partnership has resulted in more honest communication and better relations between staff and the veterans they serve. Veterans have commented that when meeting with Director Hill, he already was aware of the issue and had been working on solutions.

Mr. Speaker, please join me and our colleagues in recognizing and honoring Mr. Kent Hill, Director of the Kansas City VA Medical Center upon his retirement from the Department of Veterans Affairs. While he embraces this next phase of life with his wife, Anita; children, Blake, Kirk, Keith and Stephen; and grandchildren, he leaves with the respect and admiration of those who have had the pleasure of working with him. I wish to personally thank him for his tireless service to our country and his unquestionable dedication to our veterans. His imprint will long be felt by future generations at the Kansas City VA Medical Center and in our community.

#### COMMEMORATING THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE JAY PEANUT FESTIVAL

##### HON. JEFF MILLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, November 12, 2014*

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the Jay Peanut Festival and recognize its founders, Gene and Brenda Gabbert and the community of Jay, Florida.

The Town of Jay, situated in northern Santa Rosa County, Florida near the Florida/Alabama line, is home to over 500 residents and the annual Jay Peanut Festival.

A quarter of a century ago, Gene and Brenda Gabbert founded the festival in honor of their daughter Melissa, who had lost her battle

with cancer at the young age of 19. Melissa found great joy in frequenting agricultural festivals throughout the Gulf Coast and the special sense of community that festivals often bring to life. After her passing, the Gabberts started the Jay Peanut Festival to keep Melissa's memory alive and bring together the entire Northwest Florida community in celebration of the area's deep agricultural history.

In the 25 years since, the festival has flourished. While the pig chase has remained a highlight, what began in 1990 as a one-day event with 30–40 vendors is now a two-day event with 230 booths, live entertainment, carnival rides, 5k run, and a parade. The staple of the festival—the peanut—may attract the tens of thousands of visitors from all over; however, to the Town of Jay, the festival is much more than that. It's also a celebration of community, that Melissa was so fond of, and its members who have helped carry on this proud tradition.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to commemorate the 25-year history of the Jay Peanut Festival. My wife Vicki joins me in wishing the Gabberts and the Town of Jay all the best for continued success.

#### HONORING ATASCOSA COUNTY JUDGE DIANA BAUTISTA

##### HON. HENRY CUELLAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, November 12, 2014*

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the exceptional career of Atascosa County Judge Diana Bautista. Judge Bautista has served the people of South Texas since she was elected in 2002.

Prior to becoming County Judge, Diana Bautista worked for the county as a clerk, as a Secretary for the jail Administrator, and then became a Pleasanton police officer and Atascosa County Sheriffs Deputy. During her time with public service offices such as these, Judge Bautista learned how she could best serve the people of Atascosa County. Taking her oath in 2003, Judge Bautista has served admirably for over a decade, boldly advocating for the citizens and employees of the county. In addition to her exemplary career, Judge Bautista is a committed wife and mother and a cancer survivor.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to have the opportunity to recognize Judge Diana Bautista. Her dedication to the citizens of Atascosa County has truly made her community a better place to live and work.

#### RECOGNIZING THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF GOOD SHEPHERD HOUSING FOUNDATION

##### HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, November 12, 2014*

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the 25th Anniversary of the Good Shepherd Housing Foundation. For the past quarter century, the Foundation has provided low-cost housing to the homeless and those on the brink of homelessness in Prince William County.

Good Shepherd Housing Foundation was established in 1989 when the need for housing for the mentally ill became apparent. The first group home, "Shepherd House I," opened in 1989 with a \$1,500 donation from co-founders, Horace and Virginia Baker. As the parents of an adult child with mental health issues, the Bakers knew firsthand the challenges in finding safe housing options that would allow their son to live as independently as possible while receiving the care he needed. Mr. and Mrs. Baker, along with Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, worked closely with the Prince William County Community Services Board to establish the bedrock of a stable and lasting program. In its beginning, the Foundation provided housing for five single adults.

Since its inception, Good Shepherd Housing Foundation has grown substantially in both clientele and breadth of mission. Now in 25th year, the Foundation provides housing and supportive services for 77 single adults and 45 families in 70 households throughout Prince William. Assistance is extended to those with chronic low income and mental or physical disabilities. The organization is sustained by the efforts and donations of individuals, businesses, and churches, and it receives assistance from local, state, and federal funding.

The Shepherd Homes Program offers group living and single adult housing options to mentally-ill individuals. Shepherd Homes I, II, and III are properties owned by the Foundation that function as group homes. The Foundation also provides eight apartments, one townhouse, and one affordable rental house maintained by the Foundation offering the mentally ill, some of whom are veterans, relief from chronic homelessness. Beyond housing assistance, the Foundation offers services that put residents on a path to financial and psychological stability.

Over the years, the Foundation has expanded its mission providing a broader scope of resources to the community to aid in providing housing to individuals and families who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless. The Foundation offers a holistic program approach aimed not only at providing housing but also teaching program participants the importance of education and financial management. Programs and services include the Affordable Rentals Program, Shepherd Homes, Shepherd Leasing, and a two-year Transitional Housing Partnership. Tutoring and child-care services are also available for the children.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in honoring the work of Good Shepherd Housing Foundation in Prince William and in congratulating it on the occasion of its 25th anniversary. The Foundation exists thanks to the dedication and generosity of its board, staff, volunteers, and many community supporters, and it is another example of what makes Prince William such a wonderful place to live.

#### RECOGNIZING THE DEDICATED SERVICE OF NORTHWEST FLORIDA'S DEBORAH "DEE" COPELAND

##### HON. JEFF MILLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, November 12, 2014*

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to recognize Ms. Deborah "Dee"

Copeland upon the occasion of her retirement. For 42 years, Ms. Copeland has dedicated her career to educating our Nation's youth and serving the Gulf Coast community.

A graduate of Belhaven College in Jackson, Mississippi, Ms. Copeland began teaching at Mowat Junior High School in Panama City, Florida, in 1972. Eight years later, she joined the faculty at King Middle School in Milton, Florida, where she has established herself as a leader amongst the great educators in Northwest Florida and where she teaches today, chairs the History/Civics Department, and is the Student Government Association Advisor.

For over four decades, Ms. Copeland has inspired the minds of our Nation's youth, and her innovative techniques have brought unique learning opportunities and experiences to her students. Whether organizing an annual visit to Tallahassee, the state capital, to engage her students in the legislative process, sponsoring an annual Veteran's Day program to honor area veterans and first responders and educate her students on the contributions and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform, or building pyramids and volcanoes, Ms. Copeland's passion for teaching is demonstrated through each of her tireless efforts in making learning enjoyable and bringing it to life.

Her dedication and service, however, is not confined to her classroom at King Middle School. Ms. Copeland teaches hospital homebound students in the evenings as well as Sunday School at her local church. She has also organized and sponsored countless events, including the Ronald McDonald House Easter Basket to benefit Sacred Heart Children's Hospital in Pensacola, Florida; a Thanksgiving food basket drive to provide for the needy; a blanket giveaway for our area's homeless and to support low-income families; and Meet-the-Candidate breakfasts during election years to afford an additional opportunity to her students and the local community to participate in the democratic process.

Her involvement in the classroom and throughout the community has not gone unnoticed. As a result of her commitment to excellence and service, Ms. Copeland has received myriad awards, including the Alpha Delta Kappa Educator of the Year in 2012, the Governor's Award in Education, the International Award ISTE Ana Mackay-Gutierrez Award for Community Giving, the Santa Rosa County Volunteer of the Year in 2006, the Veteran's State Teacher of the Year in 2007, and the King Middle School "Teacher of the Year" award three times throughout her tenure.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize Ms. Deborah "Dee" Copeland for her lifetime of achievements and dedication to the Northwest Florida community. My wife Vicki joins me in wishing Ms. Copeland all the best for continued success in her well-earned retirement and thanking her for her service.

RECOGNIZING THE STROKE COMEBACK CENTER'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY

**HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 12, 2014

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the Stroke Comeback Center on the

occasion of its 10th anniversary and the critical health care services that it provides to stroke survivors and their families in our community.

The SCC is a non-profit founded by Darlene Williamson and John Phillips in 2004 to create a community in which stroke survivors and their families could receive proper long-term treatment. Meaningful care for stroke survivors is limited in the United States, and the SCC is one of less than ten such facilities. The mission of the SCC has been to pick up where traditional health care coverage misguidedly leaves off by providing affordable speech and language services to stroke survivors in a supportive and participating environment. No patient is ever turned away because they can't afford the cost.

The current situation of stroke coverage and care is in desperate need of reform. It is common misconception that recovery is quick and easy when in reality stroke survivors require comprehensive rehabilitation for a protracted period of time to fully regenerate their cognitive and physical abilities. Yes insurance coverage for such care, if provided at all, runs out within 3-12 months, and the Medicare therapy cap for speech and physical therapy falls well short of covering the true costs. There is an estimated direct and indirect cost of about \$73.7 billion. However, it is impossible to measure the emotional, physical, and financial burden a stroke puts on a survivor and their family.

Today, the SCC operates with about 100 individuals served in 40 groups weekly, growing from just five groups in 2005. More than a dozen committed volunteers contribute more than 3,000 hours annually. The SCC works closely with national, state, and local stroke-related organizations and receives referrals from all of the major hospital centers in the metropolitan area. Ninety-three percent of survivors report improvement in one or more areas of speaking, listening, writing or reading. On average, survivors report that they are now three times more confident in their social interactions allowing them to reestablish their role in their family and the community. The success of the SCC is due in part to their undiminished and comprehensive programs. Its life participation, group-based approach helps patients achieve their maximum potential.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the contributions and achievements of the Stroke Comeback Center and its dedicated staff and volunteers over the past 10 years. The services and programs offered by the SCC fill a void in the rehabilitation process and significantly improve the quality of lives of stroke survivors and their families.

IRON BILL

**HON. TED POE**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 12, 2014

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, on May 31, 2013, Houston Fire Department suffered its most tragic event in its history. Four of Houston's bravest firefighters died in the line of duty, fighting a 5-alarm blaze at a hotel in southwest Houston:

Captain EMT Matthew Renaud, 35, of Station 51;

Engineer Operator EMT Robert Bebee, 41, of Station 51;

Firefighter EMT Robert Garner, 29, of Station 68;

Probationary Firefighter Anne Sullivan, 24, of Station 68.

They were the best we had in Houston, and we are still saddened that they are gone.

The hotel's hellish inferno claimed the lives of these four firefighters and injured fourteen other firefighters when the roof collapsed—some critically. One of the brave who survived was Captain William Dowling, also known as "Iron Bill."

Iron Bill was injured serving Houston, the community in which he was raised. A graduate of Klein Oak High School, Captain Dowling left Texas to serve his nation as an enlistee with the United States Marine Corps. In 1993, on leave from Marine boot camp training, he married his high school sweetheart—Jacki. As a Marine, Iron Bill served 4 years, including a deployment to Somalia with I Marine Expeditionary Force in support of Operation Restore Hope, 1995. He returned home to Texas and to Jacki to begin his career and to start a family. Twenty-one years later, Captain Dowling and Jacki have three children: Forrest, Faith and Foster.

Iron Bill's patriotic spirit and love of the community led him to join the Houston Fire Department. He graduated from the Houston Fire Department Academy in 2000 and steadily rose through the ranks. He worked at Stations 12, 19, and 48 before making Captain at Station 68 in January of 2013. Firehouse 68 is located at the corner of Bissonnet and South Gessner in the "heart of Southwest Houston". In 2013, the fire apparatus of Firehouse 68 made 14,847 responses, making it the third busiest fire station in the City of Houston. There, at Firehouse 68, Captain Dowling became known as "Iron Bill," a fitting nickname to describe a strong and courageous hero.

It was just five months after he arrived at Station 68 that Captain Dowling and fellow firefighters received an alarm call that would take them to the gates of hell.

On that fateful day, in the heat of the Texas noonday sun, Captain Dowling along with the four other firefighters rushed into the hotel to find potential trapped guests. While the firefighters were in the hotel, the roof collapsed, trapping and killing Garner and Sullivan from Station 68 and Bebee and Renaud from Station 51. Captain Dowling's legs were crushed and burned, but he remained calm, radioed for help and waited for his brothers to pull him from the flames.

The attending physician in the ambulance said that Captain Dowling, though severely injured, kept asking about the condition of his crew. He was more concerned for the safety of others than himself—the testament of a true hero. He told the doctor, on the way to the hospital, to tell his wife and children that he would fight for them. Hearing this comes as no surprise to Captain Dowling's family: they know him as a fighter.

Captain Dowling was seriously injured with burns over thirty percent of his body, and he was placed in a medically induced coma for months at Memorial Hermann Hospital and Medical Center. He subsequently had both legs amputated and suffered brain damage. A long road of recovery was ahead for Captain Dowling, but surrounded by a team of doctors, his family, firefighter family, friends, church